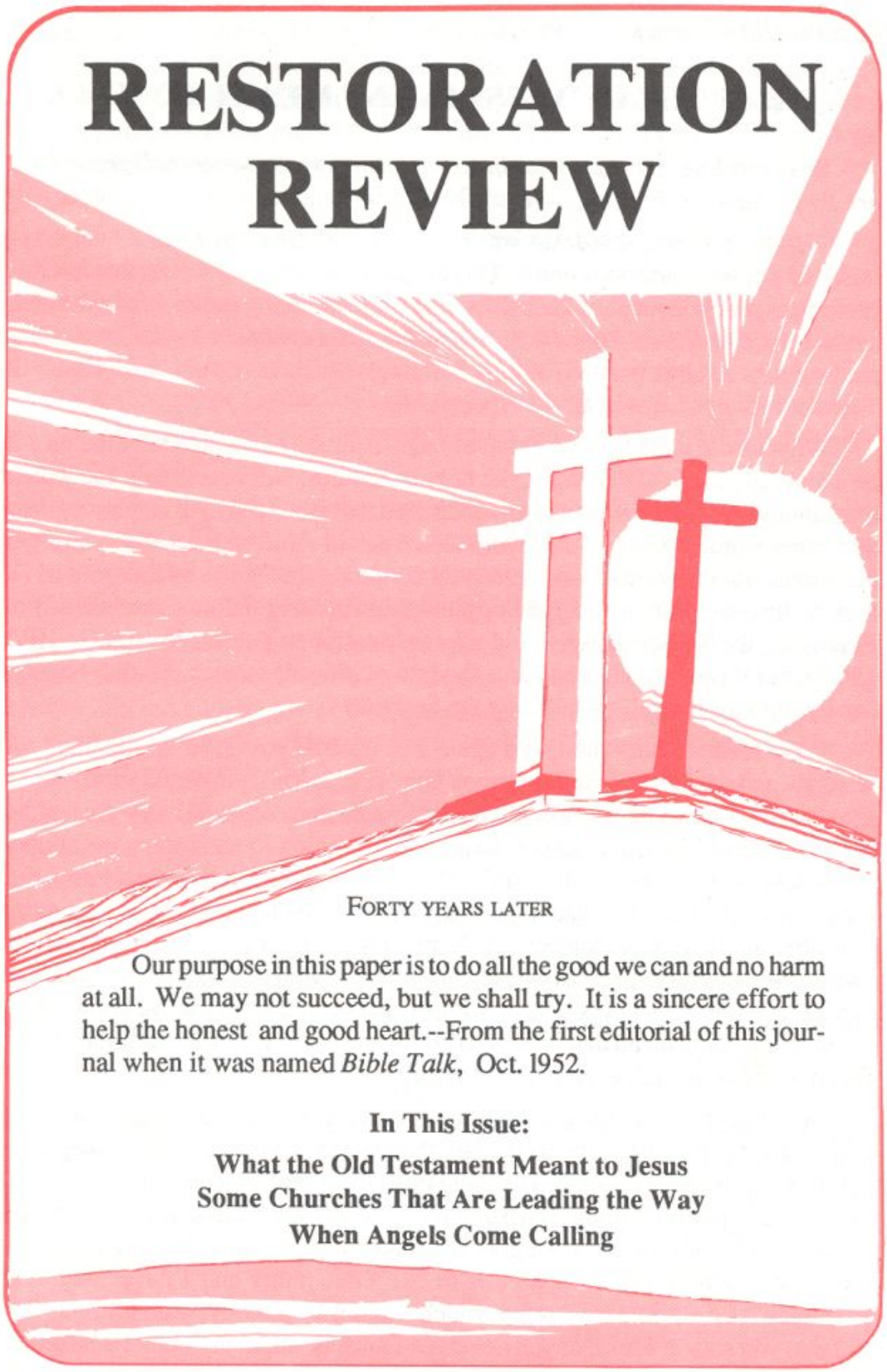
RESTORATION REVIEW



FORTY YEARS LATER

Our purpose in this paper is to do all the good we can and no harm at all. We may not succeed, but we shall try. It is a sincere effort to help the honest and good heart.--From the first editorial of this journal when it was named *Bible Talk*, Oct. 1952.

In This Issue:

What the Old Testament Meant to Jesus
Some Churches That Are Leading the Way
When Angels Come Calling

Volume 34, No. 10 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December, 1992**

Volume 34, No. 10 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December 1992**

What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No. 20

WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT MEANT TO JESUS

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life .. and these are they which testify of me.—Jn. 5:39

We may presume that Jesus was not all that different from other Jewish boys raised in a devout, orthodox home. This in spite of apocryphal stories that have him performing miracles at play, such as his clay pigeons taking on life and flying away, and raising a playmate from the dead. He would have attended synagogue school and memorized large portions of holy Scripture, which would of course be our Old Testament plus what we call the Apocrypha.

What would these Scriptures have meant to him? They would have meant what he eventually came to call them, the holy Scriptures. Not necessarily the word of God, though he would of course have believed that God speaks in and through holy Scripture. But the word of God would have meant more to Jesus than simply the Scriptures, for the word of God antedated Scripture, for "It was by the word of God that the heavens were made," as Scripture testifies, long before there was a Bible. Eventually the NT Scriptures would refer to Jesus himself as the Word of God (Rev. 19:13), but it is not likely that Jesus thought of himself as such. He did, however, finally think of himself as fulfilling the Scriptures.

Luke tells us that "the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him" (Lk. 2:40). This would surely include growing in knowledge of holy Scripture. Luke goes on to tell the story of how Jesus was "lost" for three days in Jerusalem, listening to and asking questions of the teachers of the law in the temple. Did he "camp out" in the temple area those three days, pressing the teachers for any information he could get? Luke tells us that the rabbis were astonished at Jesus' understanding and answers. His answers? He must have been answering questions as well as asking them, and this at age 12. But this does not necessarily imply that he had supernatural knowledge as a boy. It may only mean that he was so bright and his devotion to Scripture so great that it was astonishing even to the learned.

We should use our imagination in this context. We can hear Jesus ask an aged rabbi why it is that the prophets declare that the temple is to be for all peoples and yet the Gentiles are excluded. The rabbi must have said, at least to himself, "What an unusual question for a Jewish boy!" We do know that his mother Mary interrupted his adventure into higher education, reprimanding him once she found him: "Son, why have you done

this to us? Your father and I have sought You anxiously" (Lk. 2:48). Jesus' reply, which was not an apology, was startling: "Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?"

This must have shocked Mary and the rabbis. Did Jesus mean that he did not expect his parents to be looking for him after three days on the loose? Did he expect them to know that he would be at the temple "doing theology"? We can only guess what was going on in the mind of this 12-year old boy. It is evident that he was already a religious genius (Is that the word?), and that in the temple amidst the rabbis he was a spectacle of wisdom and spirituality.

It was surely an experience the rabbis could not forget, and they must have discussed among themselves who this boy might be and what would be the meaning of his extended visit among them. We may conclude that while yet a boy Jesus was absorbed in the holy Scriptures, confounding even the learned with his knowledge and insight. Might he have frightened the rabbis? I recall the reputation of a professor at Harvard of bygone days who knew so much it frightened the students. Imagine a rabbi of ordinary intelligence and resources encountering this boy genius who seemed to know more than he, and a lot more insightful.

It was at last the Scriptures that motivated Jesus to act, now an old man at 30 in comparison to a 12-year old. All those years he waited, but all those years he was a consummate student of holy Scripture. When he heard of the preaching of John the Baptist, he knew it was time, for he found John's work foretold in Scripture.

Jesus went to be baptized of John and join his community, little realizing that on that occasion he would hear the voice of God himself (for the first time?), declaring him the Father's own son. That changed everything. He didn't go with John, after all, but into the wilderness, led by the Spirit, to confront Satan and begin his work as the Son of God.

Jesus may have been surprised that Satan too quotes Scripture, but he found his strength against the Evil One to be in the Scriptures themselves. To each temptation Jesus responded with a quotation from the Bible.

At some point during these years (It may have been gradual) our Lord became convinced that the Scriptures spoke of him, and that it was his mission to fulfill the things said of him in Scripture.

And so we have that impressive statement in Jn. 5:38. The Jews searched the Scriptures diligently, supposing that in their meticulous conformity to its demands they would have salvation. "You think that in *them* you have eternal life," Jesus said to them. Then he said, "These testify of me." What a responsibility Jesus must have felt from this,

that it was in his hands to fulfill the law and the prophets that he had studied all his life. What a jolting realization it must have been when he held the scrolls of holy Scripture and said, *This is about me!*

It was clear to him that he was to fulfill what the Scriptures said of him. Over and over again he explained his action by saying "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." When they came to arrest him in the garden, he reminded them that he had taught daily in the temple but they had not bothered him. So why do so now?, he was asking them. He found his own answer in: "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mk. 14:49). He began his ministry in his home town of Nazareth by reading a portion of Isaiah in the synagogue. He startled the congregation by saying of the Messianic prophecy he had read: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk.4:21).

It was this mandate that served Jesus to the end. On the Cross he not only quoted Scripture, but at last said "It is finished." He was not finished but "it" was finished, the work he had come to do in fulfilling what was written of him. Those riveting three words, *It is finished.* reveal what the OT meant to Jesus. It was at the center of his life and work, as if it were his manual for action. Without the OT there could be no place in history for Jesus Christ. It was the reason he came into the world; to satisfy its demands was his consuming passion. It figures that in his last breath he could be satisfied that the expectation of Scripture had been realized.

Even the resurrected Christ was ever conscious of the Scriptures. To the two disciples that he met on the way to Emmaus who had difficulty believing he said, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk. 24:25-26) This shows that Jesus believed that the OT clearly prophesied not only the passion of the Messiah but his glorification as well. He went on to teach these men from the Scriptures, all by memory of course: "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

That is what the OT meant to Jesus. It is a great lesson for us. We too in expounding the Scriptures must not neglect that part that was the only Bible Jesus knew. If it was pregnant with meaning to him, it ought to be to us, and for the same reasons. When we see that all the Bible is about Christ, part of it pointing toward him, the other part pointing back to him, it gives us the rule of interpretation. We are to see the whole of the Bible in reference to Christ and interpret it in the light of his spirit.—*the Editor*

> Ignorance of the Old Testament has serious consequences. If we in the church do not know the Old Testament and do not teach and preach from it to our people, we leave them with no means for properly understanding and appropriating the Christian faith. When our forebears in the faith finally decided on at least the basic shape of the canon, they prefaced the New Testament with the Old as an essential part of the gospel. The last third of the Bible cannot be understood, they implied, without those first two thirds in the Old Testament.--Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching From The Old Testament*, p. 21.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

Summary and Review. . .

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN SAYING (3)

This is the conclusion of a three-part series of a summary of some of the themes treated in this journal over the past four decades. We have had evidence through the years that many people were liberated from legalism, sectarianism, and obscurantism by what they read in this journal. Many people through the years have written or called to express eternal gratitude. We rejoice if we have helped even a few people out of partyism and closer to the security that is in Christ. Here are a few more subjects that have made a difference in their lives.

Nature of the Movement

This journal has stood almost alone, especially among Churches of Christ and Independent Christian Churches, in telling people that the so-called “Restoration Movement” was a unity movement more than it was a restoration movement. Readers are surprised to learn that in the early days of the Stone-Campbell movement our people nearly always referred to their efforts as “the current reformation” or “this reformation” (Campbell liked “the New Reformation”) and never, not even once that I have found, did they call it “the Restoration Movement.” This was not used until divisions began to occur over the tension between restorationism and unity.

They did use the term restoration, particularly Alexander Campbell with his theme of “the restoration of the ancient order,” but it was either used as a synonym of reformation or much as we would use renewal. They did not use the term in an a historical sense, which

says the church through the centuries does not matter, or with the idea that they were restoring the original church that had ceased to exist.

The purpose of the movement was what the Campbells and Stone said it was, a unity movement. The founding documents are all unity documents, setting forth unity principles, and most of them do not even contain the term restoration. Robert Richardson, the movement's first historian and the most resourceful one, said that "the movement was born of a passion for unity and unity has been its consuming theme."

When the Church of Christ and the Christian Church leaders gather for their "Restoration" forums, it is restoration that they talk about. They appear oblivious to the fact that the movement was an effort to unite the Christians in all the sects. It is fair to say that these two denominations are not unity movements and have little or no concern for ecumenicity. They are restorationists, not unitists, and this is a tragic betrayal of their heritage. Restorationists always hold the view that they have restored the true church and unity is a matter of all others joining them. Stone and Campbell, who believed the church has always existed and who pled for unity on grounds of catholicity, did not believe that.

Baptism and Who Is A Christian

One only needs to read this paper back through the years to see how we have sought to free our people of a legalistic view of baptism and to give them a nonsectarian view of who is a Christian. We have insisted that while we hold to everything the Bible says about baptism, we reject some of the deductions drawn from what the Bible says. One deduction that we reject is that if one is not baptized by immersion for the remission of sins he is not a Christian. We have repeatedly observed that *usually* the order in the New Testament in becoming a Christian is faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Spirit, but not always. Cornelius, for example received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized, and I have no problem conceding to a Baptist that the repentant thief on the cross was saved without baptism. I just point out that penitent believers are not usually hanging on a cross and thus hindered from being baptized!

Barton Stone gave this definition: "Whoever acknowledges the leading truths of Christianity, and conforms his life to that acknowledgment, we esteem a Christian" *(Biography*, p. 332). Alexander Campbell had what he called his "favorite and oft-repeated" definition: "A Christian is one that habitually believes all that Christ says, and habitually does all that he bids him" *(Mill. Harb.*. 1837, p. 566). In the Lunenburg Letter Campbell put it this way: "But who is a Christian? I answer, Every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will *(Mill. Harb.*. 1837, p. 411).

I have been called a liberal and a heretic for not being an "ultraist" on baptism (Campbell's word). It should at least be acknowledged that Stone and Campbell were liberals and heretics before me. Oddly enough, our pioneers were never hard-liners when it came to baptism, even when they defended the ordinance on the polemic platform, as many of our people are today. They preached baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, but did not make it "absolutely essential," as Campbell put it.

In one article on this subject in 1980, I suggested that we're asking the wrong question when we ask who a Christian is, for it is barely a scriptural term. We should rather ask who is a disciple, or better still, "a disciple indeed," the term Jesus used. Our Lord says, "If you continue in my word, then you are a disciple indeed? (Jn. 7:31) Perhaps we should settle for that. We all seem to know who a disciple is. We have concretized and sectarianized the term Christian.

Nature of Error

One of the important distinctions we have made through the years is between intentional, bad-spirited error and being sincerely mistaken. There are errors and there are errors, and we should keep that in mind when we label folk "brothers in error." We are all in error about some things, except those among us who are perfect and have all knowledge. When Carl Ketcherside was accused of having fellowship with "brothers in error," he would reply, "I have no other kind of brothers except brothers in error." The most serious error is to be proud, arrogant, and judgmental; these are the sins our Lord condemned. Some people are sincerely mistaken about things we suppose we are right about. That doesn't keep them from being Christians, unless we presume that a Christian has to render perfect obedience and have perfect, knowledge.

Sam Stone, editor of the *Christian Standard.* tells the story of a preacher friend of his who when visiting an acappella Church of Christ was told he could not be called on to lead prayer because he was a brother in error, for he had an instrument in his church. The preacher replied, "I would like to meet the one you call on for prayer." It is a story that lays bare our arrogance when we presume others to be in error but not ourselves. There may be errors so serious that they would hinder our prayers, but surely being sincerely mistaken is not one of them. If so, who could pray?

Hope for the Divorced

I didn't realize how much I had written on this subject until a sister in Kansas sent me a list of all the articles over many years, urging that I put them in booklet form. My main complaint has been that certain editors, preachers, and elders are making laws about divorce and remarriage that God has not made. And that it is nothing less than nonsense to

say that people aren't really married in the eyes of God if their divorce was not for "a scriptural reason." I have noted that it may be true that people sin when they divorce and remarry, but that they are nonetheless now married to the second party. Jesus said as much, "If a man divorces his wife and marries another. . ." He is married to another!

My conclusions on this subject have been moderate, not radical. I have simply said that divorce is not the unpardonable sin, and that anyone who is divorced (even if he or she sinned in divorcing) is free to marry, for that is what divorce means—one is "loosed" and is free to marry, even if the marriage does not necessarily please God. And I consider it not only nonsense but inexcusable to tell someone who has been married a second time and has a second family that if he wants to be a Christian he has to leave his second wife and return to his first wife or remain celibate. I think Olan Hicks shows the absurdity of all this when he notes that one can be forgiven if he murders his wife and marries again, but not if he divorces her!

Interpretation

Responsible interpretation of Scripture is much of what this journal has been about. We have sought to expose the way we have warped, twisted, and abused the Bible in order to defend our party line, such as making "the gospel" to include everything in the New Testament (even things the NT is silent about, such as instrumental music!) and making "fellowship" mean approval or endorsement.

I have questioned the interpretation that says the Bible speaks authoritatively to us when it gives direct commands, approved example, and necessary inference, for there are instances when we all reject all three of these as applicable to us today. I have also warned that "We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent" must be taken loosely, for we are all sometimes silent when the Bible speaks, and we all sometimes speak when the Bible is silent. We can't help but do this if we "do church" in our modem world, for there is no way for us to be a first-century church.

I have not called for a new hermeneutics, but for the only hermeneutics there can be if we are responsible with the Bible, and that is to interpret the Scriptures in the same way and by the same rules we interpret any other literature, such as the daily newspaper or a letter from a friend. Common sense is the basic rule, but I would add in the case of the Bible that we interpret in the spirit of Christ. That would at least mean that no interpretation would be allowed that would contradict the spirit and character of Jesus Christ. How would this affect the conclusions we draw about the divorced, the dimensions of fellowship, and the role of women in the church?

Guest Writers

I want to conclude by recognizing that some of the most seminal material we have published through the decades has been by guest writers too numerous to mention. We have made a significant contribution in allowing people to be heard in these columns that otherwise would not have been heard, and as a result we have on deposit a lot of good stuff to pass along to generations yet to come. I am especially indebted to three people who have written extensively for this paper, Robert Meyers, Carl Ketcherside, and Cecil Hook.

Robert Meyers, who wrote for us mostly in the 1960's and 1970's, is perhaps the most creative and ablest writer we have published, and the most incisive and brutal. He has a way with words and can use them like a surgeon uses the scalpel. I will always be grateful to him for all the fires he built under us, fires I didn't try to extinguish.

Carl Ketcherside gave us his "Pilgrimage of Joy" in sixty installments over six years, along with other good stuff. It was all vintage Carl, both liberating and entertaining. It was a sad day for me when he left us. I miss him terribly and will always treasure our friendship, as abiding as it was unique. We both believed our enemies sought to divide us, "divide and conquer," but it never worked. They supposed we were in collusion in all we did and wrote, but the truth is that Carl never knew what was in my paper until it came in the mail, and I never knew what was in his until I read it, and sometimes I didn't know even when I had read it!

While I knew Cecil Hook long before Carl died, he has in recent years helped fill the gap of losing Carl, both as a friend and a writer. Cecil can say more in less space and say it well than any writer I've ever had, and he has the gift of communicating with people where they are, issues that concern them. That is why his several books have been widely read and appreciated. He has a way of dressing us down (or is it undressing us?) without being offensive. Ouida and I prize his and Lea's friendship.

All three of these writers were so capable that I did not have to do any editing to speak of. It is helpful to get stuff that is ready "as is." And there are writers who do not want to be edited by any editor. I had one excellent writer many years back who was a loose cannon. He was mad at the Church of Christ and it showed, such as referring to Ira Rice as "Puffed Rice." I tried to tone him down, but the moment I put the red pencil to something he wrote, he quit with no explanation. It was just as well.

I want to add that I especially appreciate several sisters in the Lord who have written for me. It was risky for them to appear in these columns and to say what they said. They are among my heroes, smart as well as beautiful.

Well, it is all over insofar as *Restoration Review* is concerned, and that too is just as well. A journal, like a person, needs to pass on, and it is better to do so while it is winning. To quote Carl Ketcherside once more, it has been a pilgrimage of joy. Well, at least a pilgrimage!—*the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

Some Churches That Are Leading The Way. . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (20)

In this last installment on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved I want to tell you about some congregations that are saving themselves. Their example could lead to the salvation of other congregations if they will have the courage to go and do likewise, each according to its gifts and calling.

Dallas

It is noteworthy that some of these churches are in Dallas, long considered a bastion of Church of Christ orthodoxy where any significant change would be unlikely. It was hardly predictable, for example, that the Preston Road Church of Christ, the sponsor of the once hard-line Preston Road School of Preaching, would open its facilities for a workshop on change, as it recently did, as recounted in our last installment. Or that the Skillman Ave. Church of Christ, always to the right of center, would in 1992 sponsor Restoration Forum X that hosted Christian Church leaders across the land, treating them as equals in the Lord.

And it is in Dallas, not in California (the farther west the more liberal!), that a Church of Christ has “An Ecumenical Fellowship” on its sign out front. The Central Church of Christ in Irving, not far from where the Cowboys play, is almost alone among our churches in having speakers from other denominations in its pulpit. It cooperates with other churches in numerous works of mercy.

Then there is the Richardson East Church of Christ that shares in special services with other churches. In one instance a number of their members went across town to worship with a small black Baptist church. This congregation has attracted city-wide attention, being written up in the press, for its outreach to the disenfranchised, including AIDS patients.

If I named but one church that exemplifies the changes I've pled for in this series, it might be the Lake Highlands Church of Christ in Dallas, particularly in terms of its Sunday worship service. It has made impressive strides toward the kind of Body life that the Scriptures call for, such as creating an environment where people are free to share.

They have a sharing time of some 10-15 minutes where people move about the congregation praying, confessing, and praising God together. One can see small huddles of people, circled arm in arm, all across the auditorium that seats about 600, which, by the way, they are filling. The minister explains to the visitors that this is not a time for small talk or Cowboy talk, but a time for spiritual fellowship.

A "praise team" made up of two men and two women lead the singing while the congregation stands. An overhead is used rather than hymnals. There is a choir and solos by both men and women. Testimonials by both men and women are often deeply moving. One sister told how she had a child out of wedlock when a teenager, how the Lord had rescued her, and how she could now serve meaningfully in a church that accepted and loved her. She touched the hearts of all present when she went on to tell how she had contacted her illegitimate child, who was raised in a Christian home, and received assurance from her that she had done the right thing in allowing her to be adopted. Another woman confessed her unfaithfulness to her husband, thanking God for forgiving her.

Prompted by the sad news that one of his children was getting a divorce, a longtime prominent Church of Christ preacher, one of 18 former ministers in that church who are burned out and now doing other things, got up and confessed that he had been an absentee-father and had failed his family. It was one more emotional moment for a congregation that is learning to be a confessing church, one that is learning to be compassionate. Our churches must cultivate this kind of Body life if we are to be saved.

Lake Highlands is able to move in these new directions because it has leaders who are shepherd-like and have learned to pray together. The elders gather an hour beforehand to pray for the service they will be leading. The church takes time with its rather long prayer list, with an elder leading the prayers. The church sees its elders, not as business men who are running the church or like a corporate board that hands down decisions, but as *spir-itual* leaders. The minister, who teaches more than preaches, goes through the Bible, a book at a time, relating what it says to present-day needs. Aware of the great diversity in his congregation, he avoids controversial "issues," allowing the Bible itself to speak to the people.

Their position on instrumental music is that acappella singing, which they do very well, is their tradition, one to be prized, but not a biblical injunction, and they do not make it an issue. In fact they use instruments in special praise services, as well as instrumental recordings with solos.

They are breaking through the male-domination that afflicts virtually all our churches. Not only do women take part in the assembly, but some of them teach mixed adult classes. One woman, who conducts seminars for other churches, is so gifted that the elders consider themselves blessed to sit in her class.

Lake Highlands is an outreach church, with many involved in Navigators and an "Overcomers" support groups. Due to a large contingency of Cambodians in Dallas, it supports a separate church for these people. They have a "children's church" during their main assembly. They encourage their people to come up with their own ministries with the church helping out. One sister, a former airline attendant, came up with the idea of persuading American Airlines to send one of their out-of-service planes to Croatia full of food. It was done, with the church filling the plane with food! They joined two neighboring churches, Episcopalian and Disciples, in a Thanksgiving service.

A child in the church thought it would be a good idea to give gloves to homeless children in Dallas. They soon had 700 pairs to distribute! Much of the church's solidarity comes through their more intimate home gatherings, cell groups, which they have two Sunday evenings a month. They are trying to get away from their building more in their ministry and outreach.

While they do all this, they do not want their congregation to be "a neat church" where Church of Christ folk can go who are bored with where they are. They are not interested in entertaining the dissatisfied. They want to be the church, serving, witnessing, meeting people's needs, including those beyond their four walls.

El Paso and Brookline

What shall I say of other churches across the land? A few churches stand almost alone in the changes they have made. The Downtown Church of Christ in El Paso, for example, is the only Church of Christ that I know of that has adopted instrumental music in its assembly that is still a Church of Christ. Women also minister from the pulpit. It is half Anglo, half Hispanic, and they minister to the poor on both sides of the Rio Grande. It has the distinction of being a non-instrument Church of Christ, with an ACU-educated minister, that has an instrument!

Then there is the Brookline Church of Christ in Massachusetts, near Harvard and M.I.T., that published a statement a few years back that it had resolved, after much study and prayer, that it would allow gifts to determine ministry, not sex. Women do all that the men do, including the pulpit ministry and serving as elders, except that the church has a steering committee instead of elders, two of which are women. Women graduate students have served as ministers.

The leaders are uneasy when there are visitors from the South and a woman is in the pulpit, for they do not want to shock people. But sometimes the visitors surprise them, even those presumed to be hardliners. One such visitor, after hearing a woman preach, commented on how uplifting the service was. The leaders there say that we all lose much in not allowing women to lead prayers, for they often pray with more urgency and about things that do not concern men. Some say that we do not really know what worship is until women have a part.

The church follows the church year in its readings and celebration of such holy days as Christmas and Easter, and they have union services with other churches. While they are acappella in their congregational singing, they use instruments on special occasions. Baptism by immersion is taught and practiced, but they do not have a membership directory as such and immersion is not required for acceptance. Names are added to their list of “Members and Friends” as people become regular in attendance. Some decide to be immersed long after being a part of the congregation, others may never. This is closely kin to “open membership,” openly rare among Churches of Christ but *de facto* not all that uncommon.

We are all indebted to Brookline, long a haven for our graduate students, including Ouida and me when I was at Harvard, for coming to grips with our tradition rather than leaving it, and it is easier to leave, as many do, than to deal with it. They have dealt with it and have remained a Church of Christ, in unity with all the rest of us in things that really matter. They say in their bulletin that they are part of the Restoration Movement.

Tulsa

Then there is the minister who recently applied for a job at the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Tulsa and brought a “Position Paper” along with him, which he passed out to the congregation. In it he stated that he favored acappella singing, but he would not be preaching against instrumental music if hired, that “It is not a biblical subject and certainly not a matter of fellowship.” There were also disclaimers to a legalistic position on baptism, the ministry of women, and the Holy Spirit. He also said that he was not “a Church of Christ preacher” and stated that he was open to fellowship with other churches. He said he

is proud of his Restoration roots and wants to stay with Churches of Christ, but not controlled by them. He wants to help lead our people out of "the paralysis of sectarianism." I tell you all this to tell you the big news. He was hired!

Lubbock

I've saved the best for the last, or at least the most unusual. Hold on to your seat for this one. The Quaker Avenue Church of Christ in Lubbock, a non-Sunday School congregation, sent the following letter to the Broadway Church of Christ, the largest and most influential Sunday School church in the same city:

> We, the elders of the Quaker Avenue Church of Christ, have for some time been grieved over the separations within the Body of Christ. While there have been steps taken in recent years to move away from the animosities of the past, there are still settled divisions among us. We, for instance, from those churches which do not favor or employ Sunday Schools, have not had much fellowship with those who do. We have frequently been regarded as "anti" brethren, and sometimes scorned as being backward and legalistic for a position we take on the basis of genuine concern for scripture. It is true that we differ in this respect from many other brethren, but we do not feel that such difference should keep us from brotherly relations in the numerous areas where we hold mutual ground.

They went on in the letter to refer to the debates of the past and all the ugly divisions. They did not want to judge on who was responsible for the divisions, but that they felt responsible "to bring about greater unity in our day." They stated that while they had not caused the divisions they had helped to maintain them. "We repent of that and seek the forgiveness of God and all our brethren," they went on to say. While they regretted all the grief that some of their people had caused in the past, they were thankful for their heritage and all the good things handed down to them.

They said that while they sought closer association "with brethren who differ with us on the Sunday School, we do not renounce our fathers in the faith." They went on to make a statement that should be heralded among all our churches, one that beautifully reflects what the Stone-Campbell movement was all about:

> From this time forth we want to be known as a people who love *all* the brethren. We believe that honest difference need not divide us, that we can enjoy sweet fellowship in all that we mutually hold dear while allowing for some diversity in interpretation and practice. Our plea for reconciliation is not

> by any means a repudiation of our position on Sunday Schools, but a recognition that such issues are less important than the blood of Jesus that made us one.

They went on to ask for "the right hand of fellowship" from the Broadway church, and added, "May our rich heritage in the Restoration Movement, which began as an attempt to unite all Christians, be rekindled today in new demonstration of the noble principles of our past. More importantly, let us fulfill the prayer of our Lord, who wanted us all to be one in order that the world might believe."

I understand that the Broadway elders were delightfully surprised to receive such a letter and responded in kind. The two churches will be looking for things they can do together, but what is important is that they have accepted each other as equals in the Lord in spite of differences, which happens to be the only way to accept each other in the Lord!

I consider this one of the most significant documents of our Movement's recent history. I hope either the Quaker Ave. church or the Broadway church will put it in pamphlet form and distribute it far and wide. It will serve to heal the wounds of our fragmented people. Let each faction among us have the spirit of Quaker Ave. Each division among us could and should write the same letter, and in place of "Sunday School" insert the "issue" that is the cause of rupture, whether instrumental music, Herald of Truth, premillennialism, plurality of cups, etc.

Conclusion

These are but a few of the changing churches among us. What does all this mean? It means that we can all change for the better if we have the will. It also means that the Churches of Christ are a beautiful people with lots of creative diversity. It means that we should recognize our diversity and accept the liberating truth that oneness does not mean sameness.

We can have churches that have Sunday School and those that do not; those that support Herald of Truth and those that do not; those that have instrumental music and those that do not; those that use plurality of cups and those that do not; churches that are premillennial and those that are not, etc., etc., and yet be united in the essentials of the faith, and doing at least some things together. And no one has to compromise any truth or violate his or her conscience!

If we are to be saved as a people and recapture our heritage as a unity movement, we have no choice but to get with it.—*the Editor*

(For the sake of the record this was my final article for *Bible Talk/Restoration Review*, 1952-1992, concluded on Nov. 18, 1992 -Leroy Garrett, Editor)

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

WHEN ANGELS COME CALLING

Ouida Garrett

Our ladies class is studying angels. We are delighted and awed by the glimpse we get of these heavenly beings. They are always before the Father's throne; they are ministering servants; they are our protectors; they will judge us; we will judge them; on occasion they lead us; they make wonderous announcements; they are intensely interested in us. Aren't these exciting ideas!

If I had to chose a favorite verse about angels it would be Heb. 1:14: "What are the angels, then? They are spirits who serve God and are sent by him to help those who are to receive salvation." When we are tempted, could it be that the angels assist by providing a way of escape? Billy Graham suggests that the devil is so fiercely after each of us that if we didn't have angels to help rebuff the evil angels none of us would have a chance. How reassuring it is to have angels on our side!

Another comforting verse is Ps. 91:11, "For He shall give His angels charge over you. To keep you in all your ways." A parallel passage is Ps. 34:7: "His angel guards those who have reverence for the Lord and rescues them from danger." Doesn't that come close to saying that we have a guardian angel? Some of the ladies have had fun speculating that the angels vie for certain ones. Can't you just hear one of them say, "You got the one I wanted; the one I got keeps me so busy I never get a moment's rest!"

Jesus taught that we are not to despise any of these little ones because their angels in heaven are always in the presence of my Father in heaven. Those who have no voice (children, rejected ones) have an advocate that always has access to the Father. You may not get justice in this world, but there will be a righting of all wrongs in the next.

That beautiful story in the Old Testament about Daniel in the lion's den telling the anxious king "My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me!" And the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the fiery furnace and Nebuchadnezzar being astonished when he looked into the furnace and saw four people in the furnace and one looked like an angel! We have good reason to think that God cares about the trials we are going through, and that he provides answers for us also.

Jesus believed in angels. When the Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife would the woman be in the resurrection who had been married to seven brothers on earth, he answered, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.” And as an aside he added, “and they never die!”

The devil tempted Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple by quoting the Scripture: “He shall give His angels charge concerning you. They shall bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Jesus successfully rebuffed all the temptations; angels then came and ministered to him.

Judas came with a great multitude to take Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus said he could have called down twelve legions of angels (60,000 to 72,000) for his defense, but he chose to drink that bitter cup. Jesus received great comfort from angels, but they were not provided when he was on the cross. It seemed he had to suffered alone.

There are Scriptures that indicate that angels are intensely interested in our world. It is as though our earth were a vast arena, and the Father is making known his great wisdom to the angels as they watch God’s plan unfold for the church.

Paul says God gave him the privilege of making all people see how God’s secret plan was to be put into effect. “God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages, in order that at the present time, by means of the church, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms.” (Eph. 3:9b-10 TEV). Peter reveals that not only the prophets wanted to understand the salvation that they prophesied about, but that the angels longed to know also. They appear to have a great concern for the church.

Doesn’t 1 Cor. 11:10 seem to confirm this idea? “On account of the angels, then, a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under authority.” In 1 Cor. 4:9 Paul says, “For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.”

“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:10). Would you live life any differently if you knew angels were observing you with great interest and rejoicing when you resolved to do better? Angels *are* watching!

While angel appearances were terrifying to Daniel, Zechariah and others, they sometime made their appearance as ordinary men. When the three angels appeared to Abraham to tell him that he and Sarah would have a son in about nine months, Abraham

did not seem to realize that he was talking to angels, at least at first. Have you ever talked to an angel? Maybe so! The Bible says, “Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did that and welcomed angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2 TEV).

An amazing verse is 1 Cor. 6:3. Paul is shaming the church because they were going to law with each other, and not before the saints. He says: “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” Do angels have free will? Do they have rules and regulations which they must obey? Will we have the wisdom to judge angels? What mystery!

Angels were also used to make important announcements. Gabriel was used especially for these momentous occasions. Daniel wrote in Dan. 8:15: “Gabriel came and stood beside me, and I was so terrified that I fell to the ground. He said to me, ‘Mortal man, understand the meaning.”

The vision had to do with the end of the world and the result of God’s anger. Daniel continued in chapter 9:21f to say: “While I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came flying down to where I was. It was the time for the evening sacrifice to be offered. He explained, ‘Daniel, I have come here to help you understand the prophecy. When you began to plead with God, he answered you. He loves you, and so I have come to tell you the answer. Now pay attention while I explain the vision.’”

Then in Lk 1:30-33 Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would conceive and bring forth a Son and should call his name Jesus; that he would be great, and would be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David; and of his throne there would be no end. This was the greatest announcement that Gabriel ever made.

The other great announcement that Gabriel made was to Zacharias. He was told that he would, indeed, have a son in his old age who would be called John. These are the four references to Gabriel, and they all have to do with revealing a message from God.

Angels are also agents of judgment. They were sent to warn and execute judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The psalmist speaks of God’s wrath toward the Egyptians in Ps. 78:49: “He let loose on them his fierce anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels.” Matthew tells us in chapter 1:41-42, “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. The book of Revelation also tells of dire judgments that will be meted out on the wicked angels.

It is comforting to believe that as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death there will be an angel dispatched to carry us to Abraham's bosom as Lazarus was. It has been suggested that "thy rod and thy staff" in Psalms 23 may very well be angels. I like to think so.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

OUR CHANGING WORLD

Ouida and I enjoyed driving to Springfield, Mo. where I had a series with the Glendale Christian Church. I arrived with a cold and finally became so hoarse that I could not finish the series. That was the first time that ever happened to me and I was embarrassed by it, but the people were very gracious, assuring me that I could come another time and finish what I had to say. It gave Ouida the advantage in that she could do all the talking, which wasn't all that much. We went on to her brother's hog farm near Grovespring, Mo., where we slept with or near about 6,000 pigs and hogs. I've been told that I'm not fit to sleep with the pigs, but I found out I am. These particular pigs are elegantly pampered and are part of one of the most advanced and scientific farms in the state.

We also made a recent trip to east Texas where I spoke at a union church called Oak Grove, near Mabank, which presides over a well-manicured country cemetery. It was an annual memorial service for the dead. In the foyer of the church they have the names listed of all those buried across the road, hundreds of them. A sobering reminder. I spoke on the hope of the believer, drawn from the promises in Rev. 21, to a congregation of old folk whose loved ones were interred there. I told them that in heaven we will not be divided into sects, and that we should make every effort to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. I assured them that those buried nearby are not really dead, for "all live unto him." They listened with rapped attention, as if what I was saying was too good to be true. That is where we are, caught up in what is too good to be true, but true nonetheless, or so we believe. They circled their cars and had dinner on the ground. You haven't lived if you haven't had dinner on the ground under tall oaks at a country church in east Texas. It is Ouida's pan of the state. Her old home was but a few miles away in Athens, which has become a kind of second home for me. When I mentioned Ouida's name from the pulpit, it brought an old school mate out of the woodwork—the audience, that is, not the cemetery!

There they stood talking, claiming to recognize each other after more than a half century out of high school. These women who never change a bit!

It may not have been in the public press (We receive releases directly from Graham's office), but it is noteworthy that Billy Graham and Patriarch Alexei, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, met recently in Moscow to discuss common interests. I was impressed with Graham's response when he was asked if the Patriarch would support his Moscow crusade: "As long as I am preaching Christ, I'll have his support." They agreed that churches should not proselytize from each other. The Patriarch related to Graham the bitter struggle the Orthodox Church has had the past seventy years under atheistic Communism during which time it lost tens of millions of members. In the crusade that followed Graham was sponsored by 150 churches in the Moscow area and 3,000 others throughout the former Soviet republics. He noted that God is doing mighty things in Russia. A few years ago Russians and Americans were considered enemies, but now we are friends, he told the people.

A 450-year old tradition was recently broken when the Church of England's synod voted for the equality of women in ministry. In nearly half of the Anglican bodies throughout the world, including the American Episcopalians, women may now be ordained as priests. It is predicted that the new women clergy may be able to heal the divisions that run deep in the world Anglican community. Almost to the day that this happened 27 women were newly elected to Congress in the U.S. Some journalists saw these events as bright spots in a world still plagued by sexual and racial prejudice. Will the Roman Catholics be next to break the tradition? How about Christian Churches and Churches of Christ? Will we be the last to base ministry strictly upon gifts and calling, not sex? If the Anglicans could break a 450-year old tradition, we should be able to manage a 100-year old one. To do so we are going to have to quit saying, "If we try that, we'll have people get up and walk out!" Unless we get with it and effect some changes there isn't going to be any-body to walkout. We'll be dead in the water. But there are signs of hope.

I was delighted with the brotherly spirit that prevailed at the Restoration Forum X held last month at the Skillman Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas. Some 200 leaders from far and wide, about evenly balanced between Church of Christ and Christian Church. met together, prayed together, studied together, lunched together. That was the most important thing about it, that it happened. It was generally conceded that "issues" do not divide us (we can differ on issues) but a divisive spirit. Instrumental music was occasionally mentioned, but it continues to be treated for the most part as a dead issue of the past. In my discussion group, made up of folk from both groups, not one person was willing to make the instrument a test of fellowship. We had fun together, including some good jokes. My favorite was told by Sam Stone. This couple that was fussing and at outs with each other

was driving along a country road. When the man saw a jackass grazing, he asked his wife, "A relative of yours?" She replied, "Yes, by marriage!" Now that is what we need to do, get together, not to debate, but to tell stories!

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

READER'S EXCHANGE

I am optimistic about Churches of Christ. We are coming out of a long period of isolation and legalism. There is a love and openness filling us as we are filled with His Spirit.—*Patrick Mead, Lancaster, Oh.*

I appreciate your work more and more. You and Carl Ketcherside have had a great influence on our lives and many others that we have been able to influence. The ripple that began at Calvary goes on and on, thank God!—*Lloyd and Stella Boyll, Indianapolis, In.*

An institution is passing with *Restoration Review.* However, in one sense you and brother Carl Ketcherside "worked yourselves out of a job" since God blessed your labors to the point that many others have taken up the same cause. Hallelujah!—*Edward Fudge, Houston, Tx.*

I will miss *Restoration Review* so much. It has been such a blessing. God bless and keep you and Ouida. Enjoy each day and issue a newsletter occasionally so we can keep in touch. Thanks!—*Frances Damron, Auburn, Al.*

Restoration Heritage Meeting V, held in this area, was the best yet. Fourteen congregations represented: 8 acappella, 5 Independent Christian, 1 Disciple, with 51 people present. The spirit was excellent and the talks well received.—*Herb Pratt, New Castle, De.*

Thanks for deciding to continue with a newsletter. Your readers, too, need to taper off and this will help. I'm looking forward to Ouida's article.—*June Hauptli, Glenwood Springs, Co.*

You, RR, Integrity, Carl Ketcherside, Chuck Swindoll, Max Lucado, Cecil and Lea Hook, C. S. Lewis, Brennan Manning, to name a few, have opened wide the windows upon a vista of eternal shining. There is great hope for us yet! My Lord carried His cross all at once and once for all! But praise be to Him, He allows me to carry mine one tiny splinter at a time!—*Kathy Wyler, Kerrville, Tx.*

From our computer room we let you see what we look like as we bring this glorious adventure to a close. As we count our many blessings we name this ministry as one of the greatest, and we salute each of you for being an important part of it. Lord willing, we'll be visiting you in our newsletter, *Last Time Around.* But as for this journal it is a victorious farewell to a grand old friend with whom we suffered much opposition and persecution. We overcame!

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

BOOK NOTES

Elizabeth Achtemeier, a preacher who writes books about preaching, says that those who listen to preachers have two concerns, their work and their home life. She insists that preachers talk about these things more. In *Preaching About Family Relationships* she discusses human nature, marriage, sex, divorce, children, the elderly, and male and female roles. She says much in only 114 pages. $10.50 postpaid.

Two books by James S. Woodroof we worth your reading. *The Aroma of Christ*, in which he shows that believers are to be the aroma of Christ by being, having, knowing, and working. It tells us how to be more fruitful and joyous Christians. *The Church In Transition* is about us, the Churches of Christ, about how we must get with it and do some changing. He shows that we can't face the future by making it an extension of the past. The books are $7.95 each, postpaid.

Louis Cochran and his wife Bess collaborated in writing *Captives of the Word,* a narrative history of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches (Independent), and the Churches of Christ. They did an excellent job, for it is an accurate, concise, and interesting account of our heritage. $13.50 postpaid.

Two other titles by Louis Cochran are recommended for those interested in Restoration history. Both are historical novels and cover most of the crucial events in our early history. *The Fool of God* is the story of Alexander Campbell, and *Raccoon John Smith* recounts the life of our most influential pioneer preacher. $11.95 postpaid.

Rachel Howard, long a widow, speaks to all women and to us all in her *In The Hands of a Woman,* which is now in its second edition and only $5.00 if you order in December. Call her at 317-644-9169 or write her at 2505 E. 10th St., Apt. E30, Anderson, In. 46012.

We are pleased that *Our Heritage in Unity and Fellowship,* which is a collection of articles by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, is being well received. There are numerous essays on Restoration history as well as various issues related to questions on unity and fellowship. $9.95 postpaid.

Now that this journal ceases with this issue, there will be demand for past issues. We will send you a random selection of 15 back issues for $5.00 including postage. Or you can order our six bound volumes that cover the years 1978-1990, except 1979-80, for $65.00. You may also be interested in reserving a copy of our bound volume for 1991-92, which we'll send you with invoice enclosed as soon as they are ready.

This is the last issue of this publication. We thank all our readers for being a part of this labor of love and work of faith. All those on our mailing list will receive our news letter, *The Last Time Around,* which will have no subscription price. Hail and farewell to this journal! God bless you each one.—Ouida and Leroy

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

RESTORATION REVIEW
1201 E. Windsor Dr.
Denton, TX 76201*
[Address Correction Requested]

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
DENTON, TX
PERMIT NO. 308

Subscription Rates: $6.00 one year (you will receive all the issues for 1992) or renewal $5.40 for the duration (Dec. 1992). In clubs of three or more (mailed by us) $3.60 per name for the duration. Foreign: $7.20 for the duration.